

Not one stone left upon another: March ch.13



The stones of the Temple Mount are huge, as tall as a full-grown man. At the SE corner of the great platform built by Herod, archaeologists started digging down into the rubble ... and found the original Herodian street, cracked and buckled by the great stones levered off by the Roman soldiers after they stormed the Temple in 70 AD. 40 years earlier, Jesus had sat there with his disciples, talking about those very stones ...

Thanks to Rachel for today's TFTD.

No stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down". (Mark 13:2)
I am afraid of heights ...

As soon as I have to climb very much above ground zero, my heart palpitates, my legs turn to jelly, there is that sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. I am overcome by paralysis.

You get the picture.

Someone once told me that the fear of heights had something to do with the unconscious memory of being born. I have no idea if that is true or not, but I am prepared to admit that there is something possibly quite irrational about the fear of heights.

So, when my husband suggested that we take a trip up one of the Twin Towers on a trip to New York back in the 90s, my heart was not overawed with joy.

But you know what? I was not that bad after all. I remember looking down from that huge height at the world down beneath .. watching the speck of a helicopter hovering in an air corridor somewhere down below. That world below was so small, so insignificant, so far removed that I felt a sense of security from the vantage point of my world above.

Yet, that safety I felt, was just an illusion.

Like you, I watched horrified as those Twin Towers on the 11 September 2001 disappear into a heap of rubble in the flick of an instant ... “not one stone left upon another”. I wondered, with an overwhelming sadness in my heart, if those people trapped on the upper floors of the Twin Towers had, like me, felt safe in that world above the world.

Out of today’s reading of a cataclysmic future, what emerges first for me is a warning about the false prophets we put our trust in and who give us a false sense of security. It reminds me that it is on Christ that our trust is founded.

Whenever my world collapses around me, the words of an old hymn I associate with Methodism, always come to mind. The insight they bring may not be earth shattering, they may come across as over-simplistic, but at such times I cling onto those words like an anchor.

The words go as follows: (but do you recognise the hymn?)

“Trust and obey

For there’s no other way

To be happy in Jesus

But to trust and obey.”

Those words give me a sense of direction, a sense of who is in charge, a sense of divine purpose in the fragility of human existence.

Those words may act as an anchor, but they were intended by the hymn writer John Sammis as an exhortation. Trust is that quintessential ingredient for endurance and faithfulness in our Christian discipleship.

We submit to that calling of discipleship against a backdrop of uncertainty. We don’t know what tomorrow brings. That insecurity of not knowing what lies ahead, like the fear of heights, can paralyse us into inertia. It is tempting to hibernate when that mountain of all that could possibly go wrong, hits home.

Yet endurance and faithfulness call us to stay awake, to be expectant. It is a warning, but I believe it is above all a promise.

As we journey this week with Christ to Jerusalem, on our journey towards Easter

From darkness to light,

From the crucifixion to the resurrection...

We can pause for a while and reflect on what it means to stay awake, to be expectant.

I think it is something about staying awake to the promise that is in the first rays of Spring sunshine.

It is about staying awake to the expectation that we will re-find that bit of something we lost during the lockdown.

Awake to the expectation that we will meet this Easter, like every Easter, the risen Christ beckoning us to follow him.

Awake to the promise in Christ's words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not". (Mark 13:31)

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